

REMARKS

Claims 1-20 had been presented. By this amendment, claim 8 has been amended to make it more similar to allowed claim 1. Claims 21-23 have been added. Reconsideration is requested.

Claims 1-7 and 18-20 have been allowed.

The examiner is rejecting claims 8-17 under 35 U.S.C. §103 (a) as unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,052,723 to Ginn (hereinafter "Ginn") in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,370,355 to Ceretta, *et al.* ("Ceretta"). The examiner cited Ginn for most of the claim elements, and Ceretta for sending follow-up messages.

As discussed in previous communications, Applicants disagree with this rejection for a number of reasons, including that Ginn does not teach or suggest automatically sending to the participants' group an answer by the participant to a first-round question. Specifically, Ginn does not propose or indicate "for one or more of the sending participants, automatically sending the received first-round message to one or more other participants with whom the sending participant is grouped." This limitation, cited in allowed claim 1, is also similarly cited in claim 8.

The examiner cites item 78, Fig. 11 and col. 9, lines 10-12 of Ginn as teaching this element. In fact, lines 10-12, which constitute part of the description of Fig. 11, teach that, "The leader can then review the 3 conversations in storage, choose one, and play this conversation for the 90 participants." When a 'leader,' meaning a person, personally reviews several responses, selects one, and then manually plays this response to a group, this cannot be considered "automatically sending the received first-round answer" as claimed. Similarly, item 78, Fig. 11 contains the caption: "Based Upon Examination, Update Switches and Send Messages to Users." Here, Ginn again fails to teach "automatically sending"; instead, in item 78 Ginn describes manually sending messages, based upon examination by a human moderator.

Rather than organizing a dialogue by dividing participants into groups and circulating participants' messages within the group automatically, Ginn seeks to manually adjudge the best response made by any participant, and after determining which response is the best, to manually send that message to all participants.

Claims 8-17 were deemed to be system claims similar to claims 1-7, which are now allowed. As with claim 1, Ginn does not teach or suggest the providing of questions that solicit

answers and automatic sending of the answers to others in a group. Ceretta is not cited for these features, and is not believed to disclose them.

Claim 21-23 recite a medium for storing programming to perform the methods of claims 1, 5, and 7. Support can be found, e.g., at page 3, lines 4-18 of the application. These claims should be allowed as claim 1 was.

None of the art cited by the examiner teaches or suggests the limitation in question, and accordingly the combination does not contain all of the elements of the claimed invention. Consequently, there is no prima facie case of obviousness.

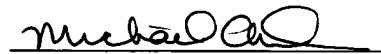
If this response does not put this application in condition for allowance, the examiner is urged to contact Applicants' attorneys at the telephone number listed below.

For at least the reasons stated above, claims 1-17 are allowable and a notice of allowance is requested.

Please apply any debits or credits relating to this matter to Deposit Account No. 08-0219, and consider this a request for any extension that may be due.

Respectfully submitted,

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Michael A. Diener
Registration No. 37,122
Attorney for Applicant

Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and Dorr LLP
60 State Street
Boston, MA 02109
Tel: (617) 526-6454
Fax: (617)-526-5000

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